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KING SHAKESPEARE

A MASQUE OF PRAISE

KING SHAKESPEARE

A MASQUE OF PRAISE FOR
THE SHAKESPEARE TERCENTENARY

WRITTEN FOR THE DRAMA LEAGUE OF BOSTON

BY

ALBERT HATTON GILMER

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, TUFTS COLLEGE

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17 Aug - 16
FOREWORD

For the many readers and teachers of Shakespeare, whether they be in schools, colleges, or clubs, desiring some form of appropriate exercise wherewith to commemorate the tercentennial of their beloved author's death, is issued this booklet. The little Masque — if such it may be termed, since it embodieth neither sweet music nor graceful dance, yet waxeth strong in compliment, the essence of the Masque — was devised for the Drama League of Boston, and first presented at the Shakespeare Revels of the Twentieth Century Club in that city. The passages contained herein comprise those fair and honest terms and words indited by the persons represented; hence it is believed that in what place soever the ceremony proveth not convenient for setting forth upon a stage, it may prove of use and interest for reading in classrooms wherein are studied the works of the master.

The Masque is not unlike a victim of fell Procrustes' bed, inasmuch as both are adaptable to the length and needs of the user. If the ceremony as printed be too long, it may be shortened by the careful omission of some who speak or appear; if too short, it may be lengthened, after exercise of skillful judgment, by the addition of other writers and actors of note and worth, of which there be many, — as Mr. Pope, Mr. S. Johnson, Mr. Pepys, Mr. and Mrs. Browning, Mr. Booth and Mr. Irving, — who have honored the memory of our great dramatist by their seemly words of commendation. Only see to it, howsoever you modify the form, you change not the spirit.

That none who wish it may be without a fitting means of respectful celebration for the memorable occasion, the Masque may be freely presented anywhere; this through the permission of the author and the publishers.

A. H. G.

Tufts College, February, 1916

1616-1916

"Any time these three hundred years"

Merry Wives of Windsor, I, 1, 12

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.

.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.

'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room,
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom."

The Fifty-fifth Sonnet

"He was not of an age, but for all time!"

Ben Jonson

KING SHAKESPEARE

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED

Allegorical Figures (non-speaking)

FATHER TIME
TRAGEDY
COMEDY

In the Seventeenth Century

JOHN HEMING
HENRY CONDELL
BEN JONSON
WILLIAM BASSE
JOHN MILTON

In the Eighteenth Century

DAVID GARRICK

In the Nineteenth Century

RALPH WALDO EMERSON
THOMAS CARLYLE

The passing of Father Time across the stage indicates the passing of a century. All characters enter from left (actors' standpoint) and go out right. Time's entrances and exits are the opposite.

KING SHAKESPEARE

[Well to the front of the stage hangs a curtain of black, deep red, or some neutral color, against the center of which is a bust (or picture) of Shakespeare upon a pedestal or table. At the right side of the stage stands a figure of TRAGEDY, in black, holding a classical tragic mask. In her girdle is a dagger. On the left stands a figure of COMEDY, gowned in yellow, with bright flowers in her hair. She holds a comic mask; in her girdle is a fool's bauble.]

From the left enter HEMING and CONDELL. HEMING carries a huge volume, a copy of the First Folio Edition, leather bound, and in size about sixteen inches long, eleven wide, and three thick. It contains the thirty-six plays of Shakespeare. He bows to the bust and then to the audience. CONDELL stands beside the pedestal.

HEMING. When fierce devouring flames 'gan to destroy
The Globe, our bank-side playhouse on the Thames,
My friend Condell, with me, did rescue from
Those blazing walls the precious manuscripts
Our friend and fellow-actor, Shakespeare, wrote.

We hand them on to eyes of generations
Yet unborn, and in this book do bring
The issue first of all his works complete.
This worthy volume, it is writ for all—

“From the most able, to him that can but spell.
There you are numbered. We had rather you were weighed.
Especially, when the fate of all books depends upon your capacities;
and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! It is now public, and you will stand for your privileges we

KING SHAKESPEARE

know: to read and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a book, the stationer says. Then, how odd soever your brains be, or your wisdoms, make your license the same, and spare not. Judge your six-penny worth, your shilling's worth at a time. But whatever you do, buy. And, though you be a magistrate of wit, and sit on the stage at Blackfriars, or the Cock-Pit, to arraign plays daily, know these plays [*Holds forth the book*] have had their trial already, and stood out all appeals, and do now come forth quitted rather by a decree of court, than any purchased letters of commendation."

[*Bows and retires, hands volume to CONDELL, and stands beside the pedestal*]

CONDELL. [*Steps forward and bows*] "It had been a thing we confess, worthie to have been wished, that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings. But since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we have collected and published them, absolute in their numbers as he conceived them, — who, as he was a happy imitator of nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together, and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers.

"But it is not our province, who only gather his works and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that read him. And there we hope you will find enough, both to draw and to hold you; for his wit can no more lie hid than it could be lost. Read him, therefore, and again and again. And if then you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger not to understand him. And so we leave you to other of his friends, whom, if you need, can be your guides; if you need them not, you can lead yourselves and others. And such readers we wish him."

[*Bows, steps back, and places the book at the foot of the bust. HEMING and CONDELL kneel before it*]

KING SHAKESPEARE

FATHER TIME *appears, right. He is old, with white hair and long white beard, and wears a long gray (or white) cloak. At his beckoning, HEMING and CONDELL pass out, right. TIME follows them out. JONSON enters, left; sees the bust, stops before it, and meditates.*

JONSON. [*Addressing the bust*] . . . "Soule of the Age!
The applause! delight! the wonder of our stage!"

[*Turns to the audience and points to the bust*]

"Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines!
Which were so richly spun and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit." [*Addresses the bust*]
"Yet must I not give Nature all: thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part,
For though the Poet's matter, Nature be,
His Art doth give the fashion. And, that he,
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same,
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame;
Or for the laurell, he may gain a scorn,
For a good Poet's made, as well as borne.
And such thou wert, Sweet Swan of Avon!"
"My Shakespeare, rise!"

BASSE *enters, left; pauses and listens.*

"I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further to make thee a roome,"
In dark Westminster's sacred gloom.

BASSE. [*Steps forward and interrupts*]
Nay, nay, good friend of his and mine,
Entomb him with the poet line.

KING SHAKESPEARE

"Renowned Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumont, lie
A little nearer Spenser, to make room
For Shakespeare in your threefold, fourfold tomb.
To lodge all four in one bed make a shift
Until Doom'sday, for hardly will a fit
Betwixt this day and that by fate be slain,
For whom the curtains shall be drawn again."

JONSON. Nay, Master Basse, 't is hollow honor craved!
Our poet's bones must not be huddle-graved!

[Turns to the audience]

"I loved the man and do honor his memory on this side
idolatry, as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an
open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions,
and gentle expressions."

[Addresses the bust]

"Thou art a monument, without a tombe,
And art alive still [*Points at the volume*], while thy booke doth live;
And we have wits to read and praise to give."

TIME enters, right, and beckons. JONSON and BASSE bow to
Shakespeare, then pass out, right. JOHN MILTON, with long
locks and attired as a Puritan, enters. He nods as if he had
overheard the dispute.

MILTON. [*To himself*] Once more hath Ben the upper argument
And will of others to his own hath bent.
Yea!

"What needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones,
The labor of an age in piled stones?
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid
Under a star-pointing pyramid?
Dear son of Memory, great heir of Fame,
What needst thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou, in our wonder and astonishment,
Hast built thyself a livelong monument."

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KING SHAKESPEARE

TIME enters, right, and beckons. MILTON bows to the bust and
obeys TIME'S summons. TIME crosses the stage from right to
left. In passing he looks questioningly at the bust of SHAKESPEARE,
passes out, left.

DAVID GARRICK enters, wearing a cloak and bearing a laurel
(or oak) wreath. He greets TRAGEDY and COMEDY, who return
his bow. Before the bust he bows.

GARRICK. [*To the bust*] "Look down, blest spirit, from above,
With all thy wonted gentleness and love.
Sweetest bard that ever sung,
Nature's glory, Fancy's child;
Never, sure, did witching tongue
Warble forth such wood-notes wild!"

[Turning to the audience]

This laurel then
"To him the first of poets, best of men.
'We ne'er shall look upon his like again' —
But his name and undiminished fame
Shall never pass away.
Let Fame, expanding all her wings,
With all her trumpet-tongues proclaim
The loved, revered, immortal name!
Shakespeare! Shakespeare! Shakespeare!"

[He places the wreath upon the book and addresses

"Then view thou thy work,
To Nature sacred as to Truth."

[He then throws aside his cloak, and recites from "*As
You Like It*," the *Seven Ages of Man*]

"All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,

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KING SHAKESPEARE

Mewling and puking in his nurse's arms,
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then the soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloan,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well-saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

FATHER TIME *enters, right, and beckons. GARRICK picks up his cloak, bows to the bust, waves farewell to COMEDY and TRAGEDY, who wave to him as he departs. FATHER TIME crosses, stopping a few seconds to gaze upon the bust, and passes out, left. CARLYLE and EMERSON enter, left, engaged in conversation.*

EMERSON. Yes, that is true. "His mind is the horizon beyond which at present we do not see. What mystery has Shakespeare not signified his knowledge of?"

CARLYLE. Aye, "he penetrated into innumerable things. He knew what men are and what the world is."

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KING SHAKESPEARE

EMERSON. "I am always happy to meet persons who perceive the transcendent superiority of Shakespeare over all other writers."
[*They walk to the bust*]

CARLYLE. [*Pointing to bust*] "In spite of the sad state Hero-worship now lies in, consider what this Shakespeare has actually become among us. Which Englishmen we ever made in this land of ours, which million of Englishmen, would we not give up rather than this Stratford peasant? There is no regiment of the highest Dignitaries that we would sell him for. He is the greatest thing we have yet done. For our honor among foreign nations, as an ornament to our English House-hold, what item is there that we would not surrender rather than him? If they asked us, 'Will you give up your Indian Empire or your Shakespeare, you English?' . . . should not we be forced to answer: 'Indian Empire or no Indian Empire, we cannot do without Shakespeare! Indian Empire will go at any rate, some day, but this Shakespeare does not go; he lasts forever with us. We cannot give up our Shakespeare.'

"Before long there will be a Saxondom covering great spaces of the globe. Now what can keep all these together, so that they do not fall out and fight, but live in peace, in brotherlike intercourse, helping one another? This King Shakespeare is the noblest, gentlest yet strongest of all rallying signs. Where-soever English men and women are, they will say to one another, 'Yes, this Shakespeare is ours: we produced him, we speak and think by him; we are of one blood and kind with him! It is a great thing for a nation that it get an articulate voice to speak forth melodiously what the heart of it means.'"

TIME *appears, right, and beckons. After bowing, CARLYLE and EMERSON depart. TRAGEDY and COMEDY cross and kneel, one at each side of the bust. TIME enters, stands before the bust, crowns it with the laurel wreath, takes the book from the pedestal, opens it, gazes upon it, closes and then presses it to his heart, and kneels.*

Curtain

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KING SHAKESPEARE

SUGGESTIONS FOR COSTUMING

Full-length portraits of all the speaking characters, except HEMING, CONDELL, and BASSE, are available in illustrated histories of English literature. If it is not convenient to "make up" or costume the persons in detail, they may be gowned in long cloaks of different colors and cut, and wear hats suggestive of the several periods. If possible, attire the persons of the Masque as follows :

HEMING, CONDELL, BASSE : Characteristic Elizabethan costume — doublet, hose, cloak, ruffs, plumed velvet hats. Beards and moustaches of the time. (Make-up hair may be put on easily with spirit gum. These are obtainable at a costumer's or at drug stores.) Shoes of velvet or soft leather.

JONSON : Plain dress of hose and close-fitting coat with large white collar that spreads out like a ruff. Thin short beard and roughly roached light hair. May wear long brown coat. Soft, slipper-like shoes.

MILTON : Puritan costume ; suit, cloak, shoes, stockings, and hat all of black. White collar and cuffs. Long hair falling down over ears.

GARRICK : Customary eighteenth-century suit of long vest, long coat with white lacy cuffs, white stockings and low shoes. Neckcloth of white with jabot of same color. Powdered bagwig of white, curled up at the sides of the head. The clothes may be of a variety of solid colors. Scant satin knickerbockers.

CARLYLE, EMERSON : Long coats of black, plain waistcoats, beaver hats. Collars, turndown or with wide opening in front, with black, old-fashioned stocks. Soft black boots. CARLYLE has rough beard of dark gray, with moustache. EMERSON is smooth faced, except for thin gray side whiskers.

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